DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 312 753 EA 021 402

AUTHOR Hargesheimer, Dick; And Others
TITLE Restructuring Schools: The Second Wave of Education Reform. An LR391 Staff Report to the Education Committee.
INSTITUTION Nebraska Legislative Council, Lincoln. Legislative Research Div.
PUB DATE Nov 88
NOTE 43p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Educational Improvement; *Educational Innovation; Elementary Secondary Education; Excellence in Education; *School Effectiveness
IDENTIFIERS *Nebraska; *School Restructuring

ABSTRACT

Because future workers will experience rapid changes in both work technologies and jobs, and because America's wellbeing is dependent upon a successfully educated and highly skilled work force, students must develop the capacity to learn new skills and tasks quickly. The traditional school structure of passive student participation is not conducive to preparing most students for the demands and challenges of the new economy. Nebraska, with its strong tradition of local control, did not respond to the first wave of educational reform (1983 through 1987) with as many standardized mandates as did most other states. To provide policymakers and educators with an opportunity to explore the concepts and principles of school restructuring, a Nebraska "Talking With Educators" project could be initiated. The project's purposes would be to solicit data from the local school districts about restructuring, provide the districts with the principles and approaches to restructuring efforts occurring elsewhere, and encourage the development of local action agendas; questionnaires and statewide and local forums could be included. Participants might be teams of local school district educators, comprised of teachers, parents, board members, administrators, legislators, and students; the teams would facilitate multiple perspectives to enhance understanding and to build innovative approaches to educational improvement. (36 footnotes and 30 references) (KM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Restructuring Schools: The Second Wave of Education Reform

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Jo Casullo

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA 021 402

Published by:
Legislative Research Division
State Capitol
P. O. Box 94945
Lincoln, NE 68509

The Legislative Research Division of the Nebraska Legislature conducts research and interim studies, analyzes legislation, and disseminates a variety of information through its library services at the request of committees, Senators, and their staff. The Division's analysts are also available for personal briefings in their respective areas of expertise, and for instruction in computer applications for the Legislature.

Printed on recycled paper

Restructuring Schools:
The Second Wave of Education Reform

An LR391 Staff Report
to
The Education Committee

Prepared by:
Dick Hargesheimer
with Larry Scherer and Dan Kamas

Education
NE DOCS #L3790 B027 .0001 - 1988

November 1988

Nebraska Legislative Council
Legislative Research Division
7th Floor, State Capitol
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509
402/471-2221

CONTENTS

Committee Membership and Staff 1

LR 391 2

Summary and Acknowledgements 3

The First Wave of Education Reform: More Is Better 5

The Second Wave of Education Reform: Less Is More 7

Restructuring In Nebraska: Ready Or Not 15

Talking With Educators: A Restructuring Project Proposal 18
- Project Proposal 18
- Project Purpose 18
- Project Assumptions 19
- Project Activities, Participants, and Timelines 19

Footnotes 22

Selected Bibliography 25

Attachments 27
- LB 994, Role and Mission of Education In Nebraska 28
- Guiding Principles of the Coalition for Essential Schools 29
- 11 Suggestions For Reform That Are Radical But Shouldn't Be, by Grant Wiggins 30
- Statement On Restructuring By Mary Futrell, President, National Education Association, July 13, 1988 34
- Statement on Restructuring by Albert Shanker, President, American Federation of Teachers, 1985 36

Committee Membership and Staff

LR 391 School Restructuring

Committee Membership:

Senator Ron Withem, Chair
719 Donegal
Papillion, NE 68046
331-8358

Senator Dennis Baack, Vice-Chair
Box 610
Kimball, NE 69145
308-235-4415

Senator Jerry Chizek
2807 So. 137th St.
Omaha, NE 68144
333-8874

Senator Merton Dierks
Box 38
Ewing, NE 68735
626-7200

Senator Vard Johnson
2707 Fontenelle Blvd.
Omaha, NE 68104
553-1269

Senator James McFarland
3440 J St.
Lincoln, NE 68510
474-6636

Senator Arlene Nelson
3127 Woodridge Blvd.
Grand Island, NE 68801
308-384-9080

Senator Richard Peterson
Route 2
Norfolk, NE 68701
454-3514

Staff:

Larry Scherer, Legal Counsel, Education Committee

Dan Kamas, Research Analyst, Legislative Research Division

Dick Hargesheimer, Legislative Research Division

LR 391

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 391. Introduced by Withem, 14th District; Bernard-Stevens, 42nd District.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this resolution is to establish a study of the methods by which the state may encourage the internal restructuring of schools in order to promote quality and innovation. The second wave of educational reform which is now covering the nation has seriously brought into question the utility of the industrial model of education in the information age. Many experts have suggested that true reform will occur only within the context of organic changes in school structure and leadership.

The attributes of school restructuring include: Decentralized, individual-school-based decision making; greater involvement of teachers, parents, and communities in the planning and setting of priorities; flexible use of time; personalization of the school environment; and an emphasis on higher-order thinking skills. One specific goal of the study shall be to assess the extent to which current rules and regulations may inhibit creativity and experimentation with restructuring by school boards, teachers, administrators, parents, students, and community.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE NINETIETH LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA, SECOND SESSION:

1. That the Education Committee of the Legislature shall be designated to conduct an interim study to carry out the purposes of this resolution.

2. That the Education Committee shall upon the conclusion of its study make a report of its findings, together with its recommendations, to the Legislative Council or Legislature.

Summary and Acknowledgements

Despite the important strides made in educational reform over the past several years, much remains to be done. Indeed, according to a broad range of educators, policymakers, and business people, the challenges facing our education system today are fundamentally different and greater than they were just a few short years ago.

Only a small proportion of high school students today acquire and master the knowledge and skills they will need in the emerging global economy. According to a recent National Assessment of Education Progress report, more than 60 percent of 17-year-old students (not counting the 15-20 percent who dropout) lack the ability to find, understand and explain relatively complicated information; only 28 percent can write an acceptable letter to a prospective employer; only 15-25 percent can respond to a school writing task; and even fewer are adequately prepared for college or business. In other recent surveys, 95 percent of freshmen at a Midwestern college could not locate Vietnam on a world map; 50 percent of college students nationwide could not name the nation's two largest states; and only 27 percent knew that Manila was the capital of the Philippines. Moreover, a recent United Nations study of 30,000 students between the ages of 10 and 14 in nine countries ranked American students next to last in their comprehension of foreign cultures. In yet another study, evaluating the performance of math students in 13 industrialized countries in their last year of school, the United States ranked fourth from the bottom.

Available data on Nebraska offers no more room for complacency than does the national data. Solid data on the performance of students in Nebraska is largely unavailable. The indicators that do exist are not encouraging. Student ACT scores have not improved significantly in a decade. Graduation rates hover around 86 percent,

suggesting that almost 14 percent of Nebraska's students do not complete high school. (Because good data on drop-out rates is not available, some educators believe the drop-out rate may be higher.) Nebraska has a higher percentage of students in poverty than at least 14 other states. Better than 25 percent of the state's adult population does not have a high school diploma.

Increasingly, educators, policymakers, and business people have recognized that nothing short of a fundamental restructuring of our educational system will suffice if we are to remain competitive in today's global marketplace. The traditional school, the one most of us are familiar with, mirrors yesterday's economy, and fails to account for the challenges and opportunities today's students will confront. Sparked by economic imperatives, and backed by common sense and evidence from over ten years of solid research on how kids learn and how they might be taught, educators throughout the nation are initiating processes to fundamentally alter our educational system.

This report outlines what is now called the "second wave" of education reform, the economic imperatives behind it, and the research evidence and principles that support it. It also suggests one way that Nebraska educators -- teachers, parents, administrators, school board members, students, and policymakers -- could come together to explore the possibilities for restructuring Nebraska's public schools.

The report is based upon the authors' reading in the literature on restructuring, and on their participation in several conferences on restructuring. While the literature on restructuring is voluminous, and growing everyday, this report relies largely on the works of Ted Sizer, Michael Cohen, Phillip Schlechty, and others cited in the Selected Bibliography.

The First Wave of Education Reform: More Is Better

We have taken the existing system and we have intensified it. More time, more textbooks, more course requirements, and so forth.
Michael Kirst, Professor at Stanford University and Co-director of PACE.

For the past five years, education has been a central issue on state policy agendas.[1] With the publication of A **Nation At Risk** in 1983, the states launched an unprecedented barrage of reforms at education.[2] Virtually every state increased funding for education, while simultaneously enacting new policies and programs aimed at raising performance standards for schools, students, and teachers.

Many of the early reform proposals, as Robert Reich stated, can be summed up in one word, **more** -- more standards, more regulations, more money, more courses, more time spent in school, more homework. Early reformers assumed, and many policymakers concurred, that more of this and more of that would translate into higher test scores, higher literacy rates, higher graduation rates.[3]

Few policymakers and educators doubt that many of these reforms were needed. By nearly any criteria, for example, teacher salaries were low, in some places abysmally so. And student test scores have inched upward in many places.[4]

By and large, however, the results have been mixed. **Standards** are up nearly everywhere, while **performance** has leveled off, lagged behind, or stagnated.[5]

The first wave of reform -- lasting from roughly 1983-1987 -- has been, as Frank Newman, President of the Education Commission of the States, said, a very intense period of change in education -- the most intense period in our history.[6] The states

have, as Michael Kirst of Stanford says, taken the the existing system and intensified it -- more time, more textbooks, more tests, more teachers, more requirements, and so forth.[7]

At the same time, the first wave of reform largely left the old education structures intact. That is, the structure of American education -- designed in the late 19th century to match an emerging industrialized economy -- remained unaltered.

The Second Wave of Education Reform: Less Is More

If there is one aphorism that drives this project more than any other, it is: 'less is more'. Better to really understand a few things well, a few essential things, the most fundamental things we can find, than to have a passing, superficial, and, indeed trivializing knowledge of a lot of things.
Ted Sizer, Chairman of Education at Brown University and of the Coalition of Essential Schools.

The message underlying what is coming to be labelled the "second wave" of education reform is that nothing short of **fundamental restructuring** of schools will suffice if the economic and social health of the nation is to be assured.[8] Largely unaltered over the past century, the structure of American education -- from state departments of education to classrooms -- is fundamentally out of alignment with contemporary society.

In large measure, the restructuring movement is driven by a recognition that the scaffolding of **American education mirrors yesterday's economy.** While the organization of the American and international economies that prevailed for three decades after World War II has changed dramatically, the organization of American education remains tethered to the late 19th century.

The United States, David Osborne states, "has evolved from an industrial economy built upon assembly-line manufacturing in large, stable firms to a **rapidly changing, knowledge-intensive economy** built upon technological innovation."[9] Standardized production of high-volume goods can no longer sustain the productivity gains the nation needs to maintain its standard of living.[10]

In the new global economy, the United States can no longer expect to be competitive simply by producing more of the same thing at lower cost.[11] Even if all

American wages were reduced by 50 percent, they would still be extravagant by global standards.[12] America's competitive advantage must shift (and in many places is shifting) toward work whose value is based more on quality, flexibility, precision, and specialization than on its low cost. Economic advantage, John Wilson, chief economist at the Bank of America recently wrote, has taken on new meaning: today it means "human creative power, a highly educated work force, organizational talent, the ability to choose, the ability to adapt."[13]

In the emerging economy, Osborne writes, "rapid change is the norm, and flexibility -- not stability -- is the key to success." In short, the future standard of living of the United States "rests upon our ability to innovate."[14]

Manufacturing muscle must be (and is being) replaced by **industrial intelligence.** Only 9 percent of American workers labor in factories today; less than 2 percent are on the farm. The number of Americans who run businesses or work for themselves now equals the number who belong to unions. And while the Fortune 500 companies have lost almost three million jobs since 1980, small businesses, those with one hundred or fewer employees, have created almost ten million. Moreover, while only 20 percent of American products were in competition with foreign goods in 1960, today over 70 percent are.[15]

The new economy will require a different and better educated student. However ideologically repugnant some find it, the fact remains, Phillip Schlechty states, that "schools are not established solely to meet the needs of students. Schools are established to meet societal needs as well," and "the failure to take into account the needs of our economy for an intelligent and highly motivated work force is a failure that cannot be endured."[16]

It is inescapable, states Michael Cohen, Associate Director of the National Governors' Association, that the well-being of the states and their citizens is becoming "increasingly dependent upon a well-educated and highly skilled workforce....Because workers in the future will experience rapid changes in both work technologies and jobs themselves, students also will be required to develop the capacity to learn new skills and tasks quickly. This will require a thorough understanding of the subject matter and an ability to apply this knowledge in creative and imaginative ways, in novel contexts, and in collaboration with others."[17]

Moreover, Cohen states, the "health of our economy as well as the stability of our democracy" will require that schools and colleges "effectively educate **all** students." Far too many citizens are today "condemned to unproductive and unfulfilling lives," and the nation can ill afford to have a single unproductive worker.[18] Given present demographic projections, by the year 2030, the number of workers supporting each retiree will have dropped from 3.3 to 2.[19]

In the past several years, an extraordinary consensus has emerged among policymakers, business leaders, and educators that the "traditional structure and organization of schools are not well suited for the new demands they face."[20] For instance, the Committee for Economic Development (CED), representing some 80 corporate chief executive officers, has urged major changes in the work environment for teachers, and decentralization of decision making to the school building level, among other things. In so doing, the CED has stressed the importance of having a workforce with problem-solving skills, capable of changing careers, not just positions, several times over a lifetime.[21] More recently, Mary Futrell, President of the National Education Association, said, in calling upon each state to designate school districts as learning laboratories: "The time has come to restructure America's schools and prepare them to

meet the great challenge of the 21st century."[22] And last fall, in Nebraska, James Merritt, superintendent of the Norfolk Public Schools wrote that "substantial improvements in quality cannot be acquired by our usual method of 'add-on' or 'add-in'....substantial improvements can only happen with substantial internal change in the schooling structure."[23]

The present structure of education, the "second wave reformers" note, mirrors the old organization of production. It is no surprise that schools look much like factories, with teachers as workers on the assembly line, students as products, administrators as foreman, principals as plant managers, superintendents as CEOs, school board members as corporate trustees, and citizens as shareholders.[24] That schools should be organized and operated like factories is a legacy of a bygone era. Even modern factories are rarely organized in such a fashion anymore.

Organized around the calendar and driven by the clock, the traditional school shuffles **young adults** from one course to another in set blocks of time, usually to **sit quietly and listen** to a lecture on this or that topic. As William Spady says, "'courses' -- which we commonly refer to as bodies of knowledge -- are actually events that uniformly last nine months, no matter what the content to be mastered or the success of the students in mastering it. Courses end when teachers and students run out of time, not when they demonstrate the intended learning for which the course presumably exists....we behave institutionally as if the entire educational enterprise will come apart unless teaching, testing, grading, awarding of credit, and promotion are done according to the calendar-driven two-semester (fifty minute) schedule, irrespective of students' learning needs or results."[25]

Schools must be reshaped to fit the reality of the present, just as they were once designed to fit the reality of the 19th and early 20th centuries.[26] Under the traditional structure of education, most students "spent eight to twelve years of their childhood training for cog jobs, while a few were propelled toward top policy and planning positions."[27] American schools have never had much difficulty "educating" the small group of students at the top; these students bring with them advantages -- i.e., educated parents, high income level families, strong support bases -- denied to many others; these students, the small group at the top, have always succeeded and will continue to succeed, regardless of the structure of the education they receive.

But pockets of excellence will no longer suffice to fill the demand in the new economy. It's no longer good enough, if in fact it ever was, to "prepare" just a few students to assume positions that require flexibility, adaptability, complex cognitive skills, and the ability to communicate complex ideas, analyze and solve complex problems, identify order and find direction in an ambiguous and uncertain environment, and to think and reason abstractly.[28] In the economy of the present, and even more so in the economy of the future, all students will need these skills. By the year 2000, people with less than a high school education will be able to fill only 14 percent of all jobs. With 25 percent of students now failing to complete high school, the U.S. Department of Labor estimates that **every year** 2.4 million youths are unlikely to become productive adults.[29] If the United States is to compete successfully in today's global marketplace, the entire fabric of American education must be reshaped and woven into a tapestry of excellence.

According to the proponents of restructuring, schools must begin to mirror the realities of the new economy. And the new economy is characterized by **ecumenical** not hierarchical **decision-making;** by **collaborative** not adversarial **relationships;** by

decentralized not centralized **authorities;** by **flexibility and improvisation** not by standardization and routinization; by **rapid change** not stability; by **new partnerships** not old rivalries, and so on.

So, **what is restructuring?** What does a restructured school look like?

Restructuring is not a new idea. Nor is there any single cookbook model of a restructured school that could be prepared for every educational appetite. As Ted Sizer, one of the movement's inspirational leaders, states: "We're not designing a model, which, like a Ford Escort, could be produced over and over and over again. What we share is a set of ideas. That's what's common."[30]

Restructuring is, however, underway in many places throughout the nation. It is backed by common sense and an impressive array of research on how students best learn and teachers best teach.

Restructuring is made up of many recipes with a variety of ingredients.[31] Among those ingredients, or ideas, to name just a few, are the following:

- *All students can learn. Some students learn different things at different rates of speed and under different conditions. Learning is not a function of the calendar or clock.*
- *Students should be viewed as workers, actively engaged in and responsible for the learning process, not passive spectators. Teachers should think of themselves as coaches or guides in the learning process, not as purveyors of information.*
- *Success breeds success. Schools and school curriculum should be structured to provide opportunities for frequent success, to enhance each student's sense of self-worth and competence.*
- *Depth of subject matter coverage should be favored over breadth of material covered; what students learn is significantly affected by the way in which knowledge is organized into the school curricula.*
- *The most important decisions are made at the classroom and school building level; giving teachers greater discretion regarding the organization of instruction is a key element in school restructuring.*

- *Decision making should be at the school site level, decentralized and collaborative, opening up new opportunities and roles for teachers, principals, superintendents, etc.*
- *Local school boards and states should provide leadership by mapping a vision, encouraging local experimentation with various school structures, and reducing unnecessary regulatory barriers to innovations.*
- *State accountability systems should be rethought, placing more emphasis on improvement standards for judging performance than on absolute or comparative approaches.*

But, just how are restructured schools doing things differently? What are some strategies or tactics of how things can be done differently?

There are, in fact, many examples. Among them are schools: Where secondary teachers teach two subjects each so they can see half the number of students for twice the amount of time; where students are workers, actively engaged, not just passive spectators; where inter-disciplinary curricula are built around essential questions, not a smorgasbord of courses; where there is team teaching and clustered classrooms; where collective planning occurs throughout the day; where school staff have personal ties to one another and to students through student advisory panels; where diplomas are awarded upon mastery not upon time spent, and so forth.[32]

Nationwide, several restructuring projects are underway. One of the more prominent is Ted Sizer's "Coalition of Essential Schools," a consortium of 47 schools and school districts in the U.S. and Canada, which are implementing restructuring strategies and sharing the lessons learned from their individual and collective experiences. Another, under the guidance of William Spady, is pursuing an "outcomes-based education model" in Arizona and Illinois. Recently, through a legislatively-enacted incentive program, "Schools for the 21st Century", the state of Washington waived all regulations, except for health and safety, for 21 schools which agreed to experiment with restructuring principles. With the encouragement, support,

and guidance of ECS and the Coalition of Essential Schools, five other states have made multi-year financial commitments to restructuring projects in their locales. These efforts to stimulate "bottom-up" school restructuring changes are indicative of the lack of satisfaction on the part of many states with the first wave of school reform.

One of the essential features of the restructuring movement is the creation of an environment in which students "take responsibility for their own learning" and teachers are given the "responsibility and means to build their own school programs." It is, Grant Wiggins has said, "an attempt to give innovative people enough freedom and administrative support to give education their best shot."[33]

Restructuring In Nebraska: Ready Or Not

Substantial improvements in quality cannot be acquired by our usual method of 'add-on' or 'add-in'....substantial improvements can only happen with substantial internal change in the schooling structure.

James Merritt, Superintendent of Schools, Norfolk, Nebraska.

The discerning reader might wonder: Why should Nebraska be concerned about the restructuring movement? Why should Nebraska consider restructuring its schools and education system? After all, Nebraska students have ranked well in national comparisons -- on the Secretary of Education's Wall Chart -- in such areas as college aptitude tests, graduation rates, and student/teacher ratios.

There may be several reasons.

First, state-by-state comparisons -- the national Wall Chart -- provide no insight into why some schools do better than others or why some students succeed where others fail. For example, to know the average ACT score of eleventh grade students provides no information about how the performance of students is distributed or about what student strengths and weaknesses are in various topics or areas. Such assessments provide virtually no guidance for those trying to decide where to focus improvement efforts. State-by-state comparisons, like the Wall Chart, are not diagnostic tools; they don't measure learning or the learning environment. In a rapidly changing and increasingly competitive world, complacency over one's standing on the Wall Chart may well be a prescription for stagnation not progress.[34]

Second, as Frank Newman, President of the Education Commission of the States told a group of legislators in December 1987, Nebraska is no longer competing with just Iowa or Minnesota. The question is, "can Nebraska do as well as Germany, France, or

Korea? Can it do as well as Japan?" We are in a tougher, much tougher world, and it is no longer sufficient to prepare only a few students at the top to think and to reason well.[35]

Third, even if all children came to school loved and well-nourished, we would still want to teach them differently. The traditional structure, in which most students are passive participants, is not conducive to preparing most students for the demands and challenges of the new economy.

Fourth, both New Horizons for Nebraska, the strategic planning process of the Nebraska Legislature, and New Seeds for Nebraska, a privately-funded report on the state's economy by SRI International, have identified education as a key element in Nebraska's capacity to compete in the 1990s and beyond. Without a highly skilled, flexible, and adaptable workforce, Nebraska may not be able to attract the kind of firms that will drive economic diversification, as well as retain many of the more highly educated young people now migrating elsewhere.[36]

Fifth, Nebraska has certain advantages that make it almost an ideal place to lead the second wave of national education reform. It's population is fairly homogeneous, and its sense of community is strong. Moreover, the first wave of school reform largely bypassed Nebraska, and this could be a plus. During the first wave, many states responded by imposing more standards, more regulations on their schools from the top down; that is, they standardized and routinized many practices without regard for diversity -- diversity among communities, among schools, among classrooms, and among the learning abilities of students. Nebraska, with its strong tradition of local control, did not respond to the first wave with as many standardized mandates as did most others. Restructuring is as much a bottom-up as it is a collaborative process;

consequently, Nebraska may be poised to leapfrog the education reforms of the recent past, and take up the reforms necessary to meet the demands and challenges of the future.

Talking With Educators: A Restructuring Project Proposal

If we always do what we've always done, we're always gonna get what we've always gotten.
Freda Norvell, Director of Professional Development Gheens Academy, Louisville, Kentucky.

During the first wave of education reform, debate was largely centered in governmental, business, and media circles. Although many educators were involved, their participation was largely confined to reacting to proposals put forth by others. Then, a few years ago, the Education Commission of the States hit upon the idea of bringing teachers together with policymakers to ask them what they thought should be done to improve the schools. With ECS encouragement and support, several states engaged in "Talking With Teachers" and "Talking With Educators" forums. No two state forums produced the same set of ideas. However, what emerged from each state forum was strikingly similar in one major respect: Given their druthers, experienced teachers and educators would fundamentally alter the way schools are structured.

Project Proposal

There are probably any number of ways that the notion of restructuring schools could be explored in Nebraska. One way would be to build upon the ECS style "Talking With Teachers" forums.

Project Purpose

A Nebraska "Talking With Educators" project could be designed to accomplish two objectives: To provide policymakers and educators with an opportunity to explore the concepts and principles of school restructuring; and to provide local educators who so choose to act upon the notion of restructuring.

The project would be a process to bring policymakers and educators together to examine and explore school restructuring. It would not be driven by any particular model or agenda for restructuring. Instead, it would be intended to stimulate productive and meaningful action on the part of those educators who wanted to implement change in school structures.

Project Assumptions

The project would be guided by a few simple assumptions. They are:

- *The most important decisions about education begin with the decisions that are made in the classroom;*
- *If a group of experienced educators were brought together and given the opportunity to design a school structure from scratch, the school would look significantly different from wnat it does today;*
- *There is no single model for a good school. No two good schools are ever exactly alike. As Sizer says, "their strength derives from the imagination and energy of their staffs, the communities that surround them, the personalities and motivations of the students they enroll and the unique match of the three. Thus, there can never be...one standardized model to be plugged in to every community."*

Project Activities, Participants, and Timelines

The project activities could include questionnaires, statewide forums, and local forums. The purpose of these activities would be to solicit information from local school districts about restructuring, provide them with information about the principles and approaches to restructuring going on in other places, and encourage the development of local action agendas. These activities could be followed by ongoing assistance provided through ESUs and the Nebraska Department of Education.

The project would be conducted over the period of one year, and would be guided by an advisory group to the Education Committee. Participants could be teams of educators from local school districts, comprised of teachers, parents, board members,

administrators, legislators, and students. The first activity, once teams are identified, could be a questionnaire asking them their views, based on their experiences, on how and what they would change in the education system. The responses could then form the basis for the first state-wide forum, designed to provide participants with feedback on their own attitudes, as well as to interact with national experts on the notions of school restructuring. Through interaction with one another -- through cross-role membership teams and boundary-spanning group interaction -- and with national experts, participants could begin to clarify their own opinions about the hows and whats of restructuring. Then, upon returning to their communities, the participant teams could, with assistance from the project, conduct local community forums, to introduce the restructuring idea locally and to assess local attitudes and opinions. The local forums could serve to get the community involved and to help the local school assess how the community might react to restructuring as a long-term strategy for locally controlled educational reform. Upon completion of the local forums, teams could return to a statewide meeting to share their impressions and ideas with their colleagues and with other community teams, as a precursor to developing local action plans for implementation of the local strategy. Action planning guides and information about available resources would be developed throughout the process and made available to local school districts to use as they see fit. Evaluation and ongoing follow-up assistance could be managed by the Department of Education, with active oversight by the Legislature.

This, obviously, is but a sketch of one way that Nebraska policymakers and educators could explore school restructuring. It would entail no mandates. It would engender to stimulate productive and meaningful action at the local level. It would bring teams of educators together to share ideas and to communicate in new and different

ways. It would present multiple perspectives to enhance understanding and build collaborative and innovative approaches to improvements in education.

Footnotes

[1]For instance, see Michael Cohen, **Restructuring The Education System: Agenda For The 1990s** (Washington, DC: National Governors' Association, 1988), p. 1.

[2]National Commission on Excellence in Education, (Washington, DC: 1983). Although the numbers keep changing, since 1983 at least 41 states have increased graduation requirements; at least 42 states have adopted stricter standards over teacher certification; at least 20 states have enacted some form of teacher pay incentive, career ladders, and the like.

[3]Robert B. Reich, **Education and The Next Economy** (Washington, DC: National Education Association, August 1988), p. 7.

[4]However, it is not at all clear that any of the first wave of reforms contributed to the rise in student scores. A U.S. Congressional Budget Office (CBO) study concludes that scores actually began rising prior to the enactment of recent initiatives. Edward B. Fiske, "Report Warns School Reforms May Fall Short," **The New York Times,** August 24, 1987, p. 1; and the Congressional Budget Office, **Educational Achievement: Explanations and Implications of Recent Trends,** (Washington, DC: CBO, 1987).

[5]Recent news headlines have cited national studies showing (e.g., the National Assessment of Educational Progress) that while 98 percent of high school students can read signs, only 36 percent can read and understand passages from newspapers; only 4.7 percent can read a railroad or airline timetable; only 28 percent can write an acceptable letter to a prospective employer; and only 27 percent can do a two-step math problem. Other reports have highlighted equally poor results in geography and history.

[6]Symposium Proceedings, **The 1987 Nebraska Legislative Issues Symposium** (Omaha and Lincoln, NE: The Center for Applied Urban Research and the Nebraska Legislative Research Division, June 1988), p. 20.

[7] **Ibid., p. 17**

[8]Phillip C. Schlechty, "Schools for the 21st Century: The Conditions for Invention," (Louisville, KY: The JCPS/Gheens Professional Development Academy, 1988), p. 1.

[9] **Laboratories of Democracy** (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1988), p. 2

[10]Reich, **op. cit.,** p. 13.

[11] **Ibid.**

[12]Osborne, **op. cit.,** p. 11.

[13]Quoted in Osborne, **op. cit.,** p. 4.

[14] **Ibid.**

[15] **Ibid., p. 3-4.**

[16]Schlechty, **op. cit.,** p. 16.

[17]Cohen, **Restructuring The Education System: Agenda For The 1990s,** pp. 1, 3.

[18] **Ibid.,** p. 1.

[19]Reich, **op. cit.,** p. 9.

[20]Cohen, **op. cit.,** p. 7.

[21]Education Writers Association, **Covering the Education Beat** (Washington, DC: 1987), pp. 27-28; "A Business Lobby for Public Education," **The New York Times,** October 26, 1987. See also, John Hall, "Business Lends a Helping Hand to Schools," **State Government News,** August 1988.

[22]"NEA Calls For Reform Experiment," **Omaha World-Herald** (AP), July 5, 1988.

[23]"New Vision Suggested For Structuring Schools," **Nebraska School Leader,** Fall 1987, p. 6.

[24]Denis P. Doyle, "Business-Led School Reform: The Second Wave," **Across The Board,** November 1987, p. 29.

[25]"Organizing For Results: The Basis of Authentic Restructuring and Reform," paper presented to the Danforth-ECS-NCSL staff seminar, Reno, NV, July 1988 p. 2. A copy of this paper is in the Legislative Reference Library.

[26]Doyle, **op. cit.,** p. 32.

[27]Reich, **op. cit.,** p. 17.

[28]Cohen, **op. cit.,** p. 7.

[29]Sharon O. Randall, "Help Wanted for the 21st Century," **State Legislatures,** August 1987, pp. 14-15.

[30]Linda Chion-Kenney, "A Report From The Field," **American Educator,** Winter 1987, p. 18.

[31]The publications by Cohen, Schlechty, and Sizer, cited in the Selected Bibliography, are rich in ingredients, and form the basis for these paragraphs.

[32]For examples, see Chion-Kenney, **op. cit.**

[33] **Ibid.,** p. 48.

[34]A Staff Report, **Evaluation and Assessment Processes in Nebraska Public Schools** (Lincoln, NE: Legislative Research Division, February 1988), p. 6. This study was funded in part by an NCSL-NIE grant-sharing award.

[35]Symposium Proceedings, **1987 Nebraska Legislative Issues Symposium,** p. 23.

[36]New Horizons For Nebraska, **New Horizons For Nebraska Issue Briefs** (Lincoln, NE: Legislative Research Division, September 1988), pp. 1, 2, 5, 11-12; SRI International, **New Seeds For Nebraska: Moving The Agenda Ahead,** (Menlo Park, CA: 1988), pp. 3, 4, 22-23.

Selected Bibliography

"A Business Lobby for Public Education," **The New York Times,** October 26, 1987.

"American Work Force Staying in School Longer," **National Journal,** September 10, 1988.

Anderson, Beverly L., and Pat L. Cox. "Configuring the Educational System for a Shared Future: Collaborative Vision, Action, Reflection," Regional Lab, Northeast, and ECS, May 1988.

Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy. **A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century.** Report of the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession. Washington, DC: Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986.

Chance, William. **The Best of Educations: Reforming America's Public Schools in the 1980s.** Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, 1986.

Chion-Kenney, Linda. "A Report From The Field: The Coalition of Essential Schools," **American Educator,** Winter 1987.

Cohen, Michael. **Restructuring The Education System: Agenda For The 1990s.** Washington, DC: National Governors' Association, 1988.

"Creating a School Community," **American Educator,** Spring 1988.

Doyle, Denis P. "Business-Led School Reform: The Second Wave," **Across The Board,** November 1987.

Elmore, Richard F., et. al. **Steady Work: Policy, Practice, and the Reform of American Education.** Prepared for the National Institute of Education. Rand Corporation, February 1988.

Hall, John. "Business Lends a Helping Hand to Schools," **State Government News,** August 1988.

Harvey, Glen and David P. Crandall. "A Beginning Look at the What and How of Restructuring." The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, Andover, MA, 1988.

Hoffman, Ellen. "Many Schools Still At Risk," **National Journal,** April 23, 1988.

Merritt, James G. "New Vision Suggested For Structuring Schools," **Nebraska School Leader, Fall 1987.**

"NEA Calls For Reform Experiment," **Omaha World-Herald** (AP), July 5, 1988.

New Horizons for Nebraska. **New Horizons for Nebraska Issue Briefs,** Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Legislative Research Division, September 1988.

"Organizing For Results In High School English." **Educational Leadership,** October 1988.

Osborne, David. **Laboratories of Democracy.** Cambridge, MA: Havard Business School Press, 1988.

"Public Educations' Failures Plague Employers." **Wall Street Journal,** June 21, 1988.

Randall, Sharon O. "Help Wanted for the 21st Century," **State Legislatures,** August 1987.

Reich, Robert B. **Education and the Next Economy.** Washington, DC: National Education Association, 1988.

Schlechty, Phillip C. "Schools For The 21st Century: The Conditions For Invention," paper presented to the ECS annual conference, Baltimore, MD, August 1988.

Siegel, Peggy M. **Education and Economic Growth: A Legislator's Guide.** Denver, CO: National Conference of State Legislatures, January 1988.

Sizer, Ted. "Too Big? Too Small?" **Horace, Coalition of Essential Schools,** Vol. 4, No. 2, February/March 1988.

Sizer, Theodore. **Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School.** Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1984.

Sizer, Ted. "RE: Learning: Creating a Society That Thinks," **State Government News,** August 1988.

Spady, William G. "Organizing For Results: The Basis of Authentic Restructuring and Reform," paper presented to the Danforth-ECS-NCSL staff workshop, Reno, NV, July 1988.

SRI International. **New Seeds For Nebraska: Moving The Agenda Ahead.** Menlo Park, CA: SRI Summary Report, 1988.

Symposium Proceedings: The 1987 Nebraska Legislative Issues Symposium, Omaha and Lincoln, NE: The Center for Applied Urban Research and the Nebraska Legislative Research Division, June 1988.

The Evolving Reform Agenda, The ECS Policies and Priorities Committee, Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, July 1987.

Attachments

LB 994, Role and Mission of Education In Nebraska

The state's mission for the public school system was defined in LB 994, an omnibus educational reform bill passed by the Unicameral in 1984:

> The Legislature hereby finds and declares that the mission of the State of Nebraska, through its public school system, is to:
>
> 1. Offer each individual the opportunity to develop competence in the basic skills of communications, computations, and knowledge of basic facts concerning the environment, history, and society;
> 2. Offer each individual the opportunity [to] develop higher order thinking and problem-solving skills by means of adequate preparation in mathematics, science, the social sciences, and foreign languages and through appropriate and progressive use of technology;
> 3. Instill in each individual the ability and desire to continue learning through his or her life;
> 4. Encourage knowledge and understanding of political society and democracy in order to foster active participation therein;
> 5. Encourage the creative potential of each individual through exposure to the fine arts and humanities;
> 6. Encourage a basic understanding of and aid the development of good health habits; and
> 7. Offer each individual the opportunity for career exploration and awareness. (Statutes of Nebraska, Sect. 79-4140.1)

Guiding Principles of the Coalition for Essential Schools*

- Principle 1: Teaching and learning should be personalized, with teachers and principals "unreservedly" responsible for what is studied, how time is spent, and what materials and pedagogies are used. No teacher should have a class load of more than eighty students.

- Principle 2: The governing metaphor of the school should be student-as-worker, rather than the more familiar metaphor, teacher-as-deliverer-of-instructional-services.

- Principle 3: The school should focus on helping adolescents to learn to use their minds well.

- Principle 4: Each student should master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge.

- Principle 5: The principal and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first and specialists second.

- Principle 6: The diploma should be awarded upon a successful demonstration of mastery.

- Principle 7: The school's goals should apply to all students.

- Principle 8: The tone of the school should stress unanxious expectation, trust, and decency.

- Principle 9: Ultimate administrative and budget targets should allow for student loads per teacher of eighty or fewer students; time for collective planning; and competitive salaries. The ultimate per-pupil cost should not exceed traditional schools by more then 10 percent.

---

* *Taken from: "A Report From the Field, the Coalition of Essential Schools," American Educator, Winter 1987, pp. 18 - 27, 47 - 48.*

11 Suggestions For Reform That Are Radical But Shouldn't Be, by Grant Wiggins

The new school year opens with 49 schools in the Coalition -- 49 different experiments with the nine Common Principles. The following thoughts are designed to provoke our new friends and challenge our old friends as they go about this fascinating and difficult business. Some of the suggestions are hopelessly idealistic; all, however, attempt to propose solutions to issues of genuine concern to all Essential-Schools-in-the-making. The aim is to stimulate discussion and keep alive the larger questions that threaten to be overlooked in the hurly-burly of daily schoolkeeping.

1. View classroom staffing needs through the eyes of the Varsity Football staff. Ignored in the talk of the "unrealistic" cost of decreasing the teacher-student load to a Coalition ideal of 80-1 is the fact that in even the *poorest* schools, the Varsity Football program is usually organized on about a 40-3 basis, with a 2-hour timeblock every day. In short, it is understood that to run a quality athletic program with personalized coaching, the ratio simply cannot be much higher and the time cannot be shorter. The public is not currently convinced that good classroom teaching is as labor-intensive as good athletic coaching -- such that a 10-1 or 15-1 ratio is a necessity, not a luxury. Re-conceptualizing the problem so that it stresses a new definition of teaching as coaching should be the first priority in seeking more funding.

2. Give exams a year after a course is taken. With all the current talk about "cultural literacy" and the desire to ensure that students are taught every essential idea and skill, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that 90% of what is taught and tested is soon forgotten. The most convincing way to justify to skeptics that "less is more" is to show how "more is less" -- how "coverage" leads to forgettable learning. Testing students a year after they have taken a course to see what is recalled will provide an instructive and perhaps sobering lesson about conventional course design and testing.

3. Stop thinking of education in terms of "content" and start thinking of it in terms of "intellectual habits." It is hard to imagine a soccer coach saying "but we 'covered' corner kicks last month!" or a music teacher complaining that "I already gave you a clear lecture on how to position your fingers on the guitar." But teachers routinely expect that an idea or skill taught once will be internalized -- as if education were inoculation.

To internalize a new habit -- note-taking skills, problem-solving strategies in math, even new conceptual knowledge such as F=ma -- requires that the student practice a skill or idea in context and from different perspectives. What would it mean to teach analytic reading as a *habit?* Even "critical thinking" is misunderstood if it is reduced to lessons. If "suspension of judgment" and "receptivity to new ideas" are alien habits (as they are for many students), how do we help students break their old, dysfunctional habits and find the new ones attractive? What classroom practices reinforce the older habits? What do weight loss and substance abuse programs teach us about the *resistance* to developing better habits, even when people want to change?

4. Insist that all major decisions about curriculum, discipline and school standards be made by consensus. (We are indebted to Nancy Mohr, Principal of University Heights Alternative High School, for this idea used in her school.) Schools tend to be "conservative" in a literal sense. The usual rules of governance (top-down decision-making, faculty decisions by majority vote, etc.) are appropriate for retention of the status quo, inappropriate for promoting and managing institutional change. Of particular concern to current Coalition projects is avoiding a "we

vs. they" or "in-group vs. out-group" thinking that is often promoted by Robert's Rules of Order and bureaucratic compartmentalization.

Why not insist that major decisions in Coalition projects involve not just team-wide consensus but school-wide consensus (or if the school is very large, consensus among all appropriate representatives)? What can we learn from Quaker meetings, schools run as "just communities," and other non-traditional governance structures about ensuring greater harmony and collaboration while reforming a school from the inside out?

5. Students should have a major role in the on-going evaluation of current Coalition experiments. Because the effect on students and their learning is what we should be concerned with, students are properly entitled to a say in whether a particular approach, unit or structure is working. (For example, Hope Essential High School last year surveyed all their students with an extensive questionnaire.) This need not be elaborate: a former colleague of mine handed out blank index cards each week on which students were encouraged to note the best and worst aspects of the previous week's work, with reasons. Another inclusive strategy is to provide students with a voice on a steering committee, as some Coalition schools now do.

6. Since genuine experiments require alternative approaches and control groups, each school project should use a number of teams working with different structures and emphases. Only one approach at a time to redesign is usually attempted in each school; when the project expands, the new group or team generally takes the experimental model as a given. Though courage and mutual trust are required to do it, why not have a friendly competition between teams to determine which approaches work better with roughly equal student populations? Otherwise, we run the risk of having no clear sense of why aspects of a Coalition project succeed or fail in a school.

7. Do not waste class time on "teaching." Make classwork be work appropriate to class; thus, make homework *count.* There are only three reasons to come together in a class: to do work collaboratively; to be "coached" while performing or practicing, with feedback from teachers and peers; or to experience something that cannot be communicated in print. Given the existence of textbooks and assignment sheets, it is a waste of precious time to devote classes to lectures: better to coach students to read while in class and let students practice answering questions about the reading for homework.

Put differently, a primary obligation in upholding standards is to make homework *essential*, insisting that classwork depend on and build off of homework, not take the place of it or duplicate it. There are any number of reasons why this suggestion is impractical at present (lack of reading skills, jobs after school, etc.), but each school would be wise to develop a long-range plan for redressing the situation.

8. All academic courses should initially be conceived as if they were to be taught to the top-track students. To honor Common Principles 1, 3 and 6 ("students should learn to use their minds well"..."the school's goals should apply to all students"..."the diploma should be awarded upon an exhibition of mastery"), we should ensure that the ***kind*** of work done in Advanced Placement or Honors courses is done school-wide. It is a sad irony that the most interesting work is often found in the courses where students are already well-motivated -- namely, the work that demands greater initiative and creativity in research, arguing a thesis, etc.

The suggestion is not meant to be taken too literally: schools need to think of raising standards across the board while simultaneously providing better "scaffolding" for weaker students. The aim is not to ignore the needs of the less able, but to respond to their needs by making chal-

lenging work simpler. Physics is not inherently more difficult than biology; Shakespeare can be read by anyone with profit if the right kind of support systems are provided. To use a metaphor, schools should provide better "training wheels" for less able students -- as opposed to "dummying down" the curriculum and keeping the less able or less ambitious stuck on an intellectual tricycle.

9. Better incentives should be provided by the grading system. Implicit in the previous idea is a need for rethinking our grading system. Too often a set of grades represents a self-fulfilling prophecy to students (as when teachers say "oh, he's a 'C' student.") And rarely do grades and comments help students gauge their *overall* progress toward meeting diploma requirements based on competence.

Grades are only symbols of standards, not the standards themselves. A "D" on a paper does not tell a student how to improve or what criteria have to be internalized. In the ideal Essential School, grades as we know them would play a minor role -- just as they play little or no role in athletics or drama where students learn to judge their work by comparisons with models and earlier efforts and the demands of the performance. Progress comes through successive approximations. The good writer knows when a paper is adequate; the well-trained science student is not satisfied with sloppy and incomplete lab results. Assessment should *teach* standards, not simply apply them.

How can we devise a grading and feedback system that sets all students a clearer target while also providing better incentives for those who start out at a disadvantage? Here are two different ideas:

(a) A system that encourages the less able by initially rewarding effort and progress. All students would be expected to do the same work, but the grade systems used would be different and dependent on entry-level ability. Thus, imagine if schools were like city softball leagues: players would begin in one of three grading "leagues" or levels -- even though they would be in the *same* classroom doing the *same* work.

For the least able students, the initial "standard" would have more to do with effort and improvement than objective mastery. (After all, Little Leaguers play the "same" authentic game as professionals, but are judged on their own terms.) "Mastery" as measured relative to exit-level knowledge might count for half their grade; progress over the course of the year would determine the other half. In the middle league, the ratio of mastery/progress might be 66/33%; and in the third league, the grade might be 75/25% or higher, depending upon the course. The students' grade in the gradebook would always be followed by a Roman numeral, indicating their "league" (as a way to help the colleges read the transcript and fairly judge students relative to each other more effectively).

This system may seem to resemble tracking but actually heads in the opposite direction. Rather than a system of rigid parallel tracks, the aim and expectation is that students will move up. Just as the winners in a lower division move up to the next division in softball leagues, students who started in the lowest level would move up after getting a certain GPA. They might be *required* to move up by a specified time or be deemed on academic probation. And, it would thus be possible to move *down*: the good student, like the good athlete, should not be allowed to "go through the motions." Bright but disaffected students would be held accountable for their attitude and habits in their grade.

(b) Have each teacher routinely design a range of questions on final exams or exhibitions, with "degree of difficulty" points tacked onto each question (as modeled on the system used in competitive diving). Students would receive both grades and degree of difficulty points, with

graduation dependent upon a certain standard for both. This would encourage teachers to design more "personalized" tests having a wider range of challenges, as well as encourage the less able student to achieve authentic success while mindful of the need to become more proficient.

10. Schools should develop a pre-test and post-test to measure to their own satisfaction the effect of the school on student performance. While appropriate to complain about the limitations of standardized testing, it is unwise to ignore the need for making judgments about the overall effectiveness of schooling. A legitimate test of a school's effectiveness depends on the ability to make judgments about the *relative* progress of its students over time.

Do your school's students actually improve as a whole in their reading and writing ability over the course of four years? The good schools would be those that have the steepest curve of improvement, not those whose students have the highest average scores. By picking or designing a test of essential skills and knowledge, given to students at the end of each year, a faculty provides vital insights for itself in assessing its own work.

11. Schools, not universities, should be the primary home of researchers. The school should be a "center of inquiry" (to invoke the title of Robert Schaefer's 20-year-old book). There should be full-time and part-time employees of the school who are qualified to conduct educational research, while working in an "assessment center" under the jurisdiction of Principals, Deans and/or Department Heads. Is a new teaching approach effective? Does one schedule work better than others? Are teachers spending increasingly less time as the classroom "workers"? Implicit in this idea is that many veteran teachers should be hired to both teach and conduct research.

Remember: the suggestions above are provocations. Attention to the problems is what matters.

Statement On Restructuring By Mary Futrell, President, National Education Association, July 13, 1988

NEA Delegates Endorse Learning Laboratories;
Step Up Efforts To 'Restructure' Education

NEW ORLEANS — Delegates to the 1988 annual convention of the National Education Association overwhelmingly adopted plans to create a national network of innovative school districts.

These innovative districts, pledged NEA President Mary Hatwood Futrell in her convention keynote address, will serve as ''learning laboratories'' that ''will seek to restructure how our schools function.''

Over 8,400 delegates, representing more than 1.9 million NEA members nationwide, debated Futrell's learning labs proposal — and a host of other education issues — during four days of convention sessions, July 4-7.

''The time has come to restructure America's schools and prepare them to meet the great challenge of the 21st century,'' said Futrell. ''A nation-at-risk will be saved only by a nation of risk-takers.''

NEA Delegates Endorse Learning Laboratories;
Step Up Efforts To 'Restructure' Education

The new NEA plan calls on each state to designate at least one school district as a learning laboratory where teachers could experiment and take the lead in reshaping American education.

NEA, Futrell noted in her convention keynote, has already gained considerable expertise on what it takes to effectively change how schools are structured. The experiences of some 200 NEA-sponsored demonstration sites for school-based reform have generated new ideas that can actually improve learning.

''Now it's time to take the lessons teachers have learned from these pilot efforts and test them out on a broader scale, in a national network of innovative learning laboratory school districts,'' explained Futrell.

To begin the learning laboratory effort, NEA will provide state and local affiliates planning grants and technical support. A total of $450,000 has been earmarked for the project in 1988-89.

Also announced at the NEA convention was another new major initiative that will make the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE), the philanthropic arm of NEA, one of the top grant-giving foundations in all of education.

Over the next five years, contributions from NEA members to NFIE will create an endowment big enough to yield a million dollars a year for education reform efforts designed and developed by teachers.

Statement on Restructuring by Albert Shanker, President, American Federation of Teachers, 1985

5. Restructuring the Delivery of Education

It is time to consider a wholesale restructuring of the way in which educational services are delivered, for teaching will not be a genuine profession unless such restructuring is accomplished.

There are two million public school teachers in the United States. Half of them will retire and be replaced in the next decade. The cohort of those who will be entering college is about 20 percent smaller than the equivalent cohort a decade ago, and more of them, proportionately, will be minority young people who have not yet achieved the same rate of academic success as their nonminority peers. There is going to be a talent shortage in this country; and given the increased demand for talent by new and revamped industries and by other agencies of government, there is very little chance that public education will get enough career teachers of the caliber we need in terms of the new standards we are calling for. The demographics are against us.

So are the economics. We know that vastly increased teacher salaries will be needed to recruit and retain good teachers. But if you were to give two million teachers each a thousand dollar raise, the cost would be $2 billion. Of course, a thousand dollar increase doesn't do very much — it certainly wouldn't solve the recruitment and retention problems. Suppose we gave each teacher a 50 percent increase. That would still not make us a very well paid profession, but it would cost $30 billion. Title I at its highest point was about $3.5 billion, so there is no likelihood at all of giving two million teachers a 50 percent raise. And it wouldn't do much good either, because as soon as we raise salaries substantially, so will IBM and other talent-intensive companies, because they are not about to close up shop just because the schools need teachers.

So we are not going to get either the talent or the money to replace a million teachers soon and another million some years later. What do we do? Part of the answer is to consider what it is that teachers do and whether part of it can be accomplished in some other ways, freeing teachers to do what *only* they can, tasks akin to what genuine professionals do, perhaps a smaller number of *career* teachers earning genuinely professional salaries, say in the $75,000 to $85,000 range in 1985 dollars. Let me suggest a structure.

Three of the major education reports in the wake of "A Nation at Risk" dealt with what actually goes on in classrooms, those by Ernest Boyer, Theodore Sizer, and John Goodlad. Enormously sympathetic to teachers, they nevertheless were extremely critical of how teachers teach. They found that most teachers spend an inordinate amount of their teaching time, up to 85 percent, lecturing, with very little exchange with students. And, of course, since most teachers' lecture styles are not as entertaining as the previous evening's television fare, the attention span of the students (or even adults, for that matter) is not very long. Now, some of what teachers are lecturing about today can be dealt with much more effectively with the new technology. A well-produced half-hour video cassette on how the Eskimos live in Alaska is likely to communicate memorable information much better than any lecture, and in a medium which has already grabbed today's students from infancy on. The technology is here. Either we will seize it and use it to our advantage — to free teachers for what it is they can do uniquely, professionally — or it will be imposed on us in some unthinking attempt to replace some teachers without improving the work lives, status or salaries of the others.

Suppose that in addition to the technology there were substantial numbers of very bright college graduates who came into teaching for a variety of reasons — to repay a college loan, meet a scholarship commitment, fulfill some personal idealism in the same way people went into the Peace Corps — but who did not intend to stay more than five years or so. And suppose that a good deal of the normal classroom work was turned over to these very bright and idealistic "transients" who would not be regarded as career teachers, who would not have quite the same rites of passage into the profession (but would, nevertheless, have to demonstrate smarts and skills), who would be trained by the career teachers and work under their guidance and mentorship — and who could, of course, should they ultimately want to, pursue a path to the level of career teacher.

Who would the career teachers be, and what would their lives be like? First of all, they would be people who intended to make teaching their life's work and who got into the profession only with great difficulty, by meeting all of the very high standards I discussed earlier. They would be engaged not mainly in lecturing students but in actively coaching students, teaching thinking skills, stimulating creativity, working with students on rewriting papers, helping students learn to reason, argue and persuade. No machine can replace good teachers in these tasks; yet given the reality of life in today's public schools, the best teachers are left with too little time to perform them. In **Horace's Compromise**, Ted Sizer talks about the typical high school teacher with anywhere from 150 to 175 students to see every day, and how it is virtually impossible to assign even two written pieces a week. Assuming 10 minutes per student per paper — a ridiculously small amount of time to mark the paper and go over it with the student — two themes a week would require 58 hours. Part of the restructuring I've proposed would be to ensure that teachers have far fewer students and are able to spend an appropriate amount of time with each. In addition, the career teachers would train the novice teachers, evaluate textbooks, select other materials, design curriculums, serve on the professional practice boards that set and monitor the standards for the profession, be part

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

of university faculties and engage in a variety of other activities both with students and with their colleagues.

There would not be two million such career teachers. The numbers would be substantially smaller, perhaps only a third as many. But such teachers would earn $75,000 to $85,000 a year in today's terms. They would be true professionals in every sense of the word. And we would have created a delivery system in which the public could have a substantial amount of confidence, because both the career teachers and the "transient" teachers would have been selected only from among the best and brightest college students; and, too, schools would be structured in such a way that important goals which are not being addressed well today — the teaching of critical thinking skills, for example, or the selection of first-rate textbooks — would be fully realized.

There is much more we could do to restructure schools and create a profession. Why shouldn't teachers have the capacity to teach from their strengths? Some elementary school teachers have a particular bent for math, others would prefer to focus on the teaching of reading skills. Why shouldn't teachers be able to trade off with their colleagues, not only in different subjects but in different aspects of the same subject? Some teachers have a particular knack for teaching writing, while others are especially talented in stimulating an appreciation of poetry — why must both kinds be English teachers and do everything? Doctors and lawyers don't have difficulty in recommending colleagues with different specialties and different strengths.

Another major change would be to restructure our school calendar into shorter time units, perhaps terms no longer than six weeks, in which less material and fewer concepts are fully taught. This would give teachers and students a better opportunity to zero in on anything gone amiss. The longer the wait, the harder it is to tell what's wrong — and waiting a year makes such analysis untimely and correction harder. That's why some students drop farther and farther behind. If we empowered teachers to improve the system — like Deming's managers — they might consider using time in much more varied ways, moving youngsters along at their own pace. The rigid school year encourages youngsters (and sometimes teachers) to follow the Scarlet O'Hara path — "I'll think about it tomorrow." After all, missing a few days in September or October doesn't seem very important when the reckoning doesn't come until June; but often by December, a child is too far behind to catch up, and the syndrome of failure sets in. Creative thinking on the shape of the school year is long overdue.

There are undoubtedly many other good ideas for our schools; and classroom teachers, if they have the opportunity, will come up with some of the best. But change is overdue. Our schools are organized today exactly the way they were a century ago. Other institutions are finding different and better ways to operate for these different times. We can continue, through collective bargaining, to make some incremental changes in salaries, in the size of classes,